

Jamie Perez
165 Adelaide Street
Hartford, Ct 06114

March 18, 2016

HB5531 AN ACT CONCERNING THE CARE AND TREATMENT OF PERSONS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS.

My name is Jamie Perez and I am a resident of Hartford, Connecticut.

I am actively involved with Advocacy Unlimited as an Operate for the statewide Young Adult Warmline, which is a peer-run initiative for young people who seek to connect with resources, find motivation to move forward, and inspiration through speaking with other young people who have been there.

I am here today to testify in opposition to H.B. 5531.

The reason I am testifying is because there were times that I have been hospitalized at different hospitals in Hartford. I found that they would not discharge me if I did not, or refused, to take my medication.

I was restrained while being in the hospital and it is not a good feeling at all. Especially because I experience symptoms of a mental health challenge. People who experience mental health challenges should not be forcibly restrained, given that they already have faced trauma.

I don't think that you understand what it actually feels like to be forcibly medicated. They hold you down, and stick a really big needle in your behind. It not only is scary to have a bunch of people restricting your movement, but it also hurts a lot.

In my case, I tried to speak out for someone who was being restrained for praying in Spanish. The people working at the IOL didn't understand the language that he was speaking, and because of this language barrier, they just assumed that he was speaking nonsense. Instead of finding a way to connect, they just threw him down on the ground, and six staff held him down while he screamed. Of course I got upset with seeing this - he did nothing to deserve that.

That is just not the way to treat someone going through crises. When it comes to medication, the doctors change your pills and seem like they will just name any medication for you to take, even if you say it hasn't worked in the past. For example, they forced me to take Risperdal even though I told them it didn't work - they don't care.

People with mental health challenges are not treated equal in the community we have to struggle to even get our own apartments. For discharge it is a hassle too. They drug us up with pills then try to make us sign all type of papers some people are not even aware of what they are signing because they are so drugged up with meds. I believe that we need to keep our right to decide if we want to be on medication and this should not be forced on a person. I also think that if a person refuses to take medication at home they are refusing for a reason. Maybe should be asking why people don't want medication, and why people feel like the treatment offered is so inhumane.